

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Venicia Guiala, 65, retired Dole Company (Hawaiian Pine Company) field worker

Venicia (Damasco) Guiala, Filipina, was born in Batac, Ilocos Norte, Philippines on August 20, 1913. The oldest child of farmers, she received a college degree from St. William College in Laoag, Ilocos Norte and between 1938 and 1949 taught English, Tagalog and Home Economics in barrio schools.

In 1947, she married Ruperto Guiala, who had been a pineapple field worker on Lanai and who had returned to the Philippines to live. Together they decided to return to Hawaii, and in 1949, she left her teaching profession and joined her husband on Lanai.

In 1952, her husband was transferred to Dole Company's Wahiawa plantation, and four years later in 1956, she began working in the pineapple fields as a seasonal employee. During her 20 years of employment in Dole Company's fields, her jobs included hoe-hana, stripping, harvesting, and planting checker. She also worked briefly in the Experiment Station.

During the 1968 pineapple strike, she became president of the Dole Whitmore ILWU Women's Auxiliary, an organization of women field workers. Its purpose was to lend aid to picketing workers.

Since that time, she has been an active member of various organizations: Whitmore Senior Citizens, Filipino Women's Club, and the Annac Tibatac Organization. Presently she is an outreach worker for handicapped individuals.

Retired from the fields since 1976, Mrs. Guiala lives in Whitmore with her husband and two sons.

Tape No. 6-20-1-79

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Venicia D. Guiala (VG)

March 16, 1979

Whitmore, Oahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mrs. Venicia Guiala. Today is March 16, 1979. We are at the Whitmore Community Center.

Can you tell us where you born and when you were born?

VG: Yes. I was born in Batac, Ilocos Norte, Philippines on August 20, 1913.

WN: Okay. What kind of work did your parents do?

VG: Oh, they had been farmers---they were farmers.

WN: Uh huh. Your mother and your father?

VG: Yeah.

WN: What did they farm?

VG: Rice, corn, garlic, onions, tobacco, tomatoes, any kind of vegetable.

WN: Did they ever consider coming to Hawaii for plantation work?

VG: No. They did not. Because we get plenty lands. In almost every town, we get lands.

WN: What did you want to be when you were young?

VG: I wanted to be a nurse, but I could not pass the qualification physical. Because I'm short. It must be that the one who good for nursing should be at least five feet tall. I am below five feet. So I shifted to teaching. I went to the Philippine Normal School. I graduated there and then after that, I taught. Ten years before I came to Hawaii. [VG came to Hawaii in 1949.]

WN: What did your parents want you to be?

VG: Oh. They did not have any particular preference. So long I went to school and get something. I wanted to be a lawyer. At first. Nurse, a lawyer, but you know, our income is limited. So, my father persuaded me to go to the vocational school of teaching.

WN: So after you graduated from high school, did you go on to further education?

VG: Oh, at the same time, after finishing. Because I took normal course, eh? After finishing the high school level, I was qualified to teach for learn. I taught, and then, summertime, I have to go to college to get some more credits. Until I finish the college level. I been teaching.

WN: So you graduated from college, then.

VG: Uh huh [yes].

WN: What college did you go to in the Philippines?

VG: St. William College in Laoag, Ilocos Norte. That is the capital of the province.

WN: Okay. How many years of college did you go to?

VG: Two years. Because after that high school level, I took another one--two years only.

WN: You said you wanted to be a lawyer at one time. Was that unusual for a Filipino woman at that time?

VG: I'm not sure, but I like that course. Because you know I love to talk, eh? I like to argue. And that's---we don't have any brother, so I wanted to take that course so that in case we get some problems on the land, I can defend. But, we didn't have enough means. We didn't have enough cash. We get plenty, but on the land. It is hard to sell the land. Nobody could buy. So I took teaching so I could help my younger sisters go to school.

WN: So, when you were teaching in the Philippines, this was in 1938?

VG: Yes.

WN: What did you teach? What courses and what level did you teach?

VG: Oh, mostly the beginners. We taught English. Because one time the Philippines was under the Americans. We were not yet independent that time, so we taught the English language. We taught that to the pupils. Mostly I taught the lower grades. You know, the beginners. Because when the district get a meeting, they found out that my pupils--my students--were the first---number one in the district. They can read. They can write. Because I get a certain

method of doing it. I use the alphabet. You know, you teach the alphabet--two alphabets one day. For example, "A" like in "apple." The sound of "A" is "A." And then the words that begins with "A." And then, at the same time, they have to learn to write, too. I demonstrate how to write. And in writing, that is the lesson in writing, too. So, reading, phonics, and writing, that is combined already. So they found out my pupils were number one in the district. They gave me that one.

WN: You had the top pupils in English.

VG: Yes. I had the top pupils not only in English, but in writing and in reading. Because as I teach the alphabet, they know the name of the alphabet, they know how to write it, and they know how to say it.

WN: Did you teach anything else besides English?

VG: Yes. Language. The (Tagalog national) language. But during the liberation, they could not find any Home Economics teacher. HE teacher. This Home Economics, the one who sew, for cook, like that. I taught that again for almost one year because there was no qualified teacher. On temporary basis. That's all.

WN: The pupils that you were teaching, were they mostly farmers' children?

VG: Oh yes. Especially in the barrio. Barrio means villages--small villages. They were kind of poor. So you have to understand. They had to bring their lunch. I have to eat with them. Trade my food with the food they bring. And the people like me very much. Even the children. In fact, when I go away---when I am transferred to another place, they cry. They go to the District Supervisor, even to the Superintendent, to hold me back in that place. Because I organize the PTA [Parent-Teacher Association]. That's how I called the parents. I talk to them about the progress of their children, and they reported it to me too.

Not only that. They know how to pray. Because, you know the parents there in the rural area, they come home late [and] they are tired. They don't have enough time to teach their children about God. They are far. They cannot go to town to hear Mass. So, I always make a point that when we have this recess time or something like that, they are willing to stay back for 10 or 5 minutes. So, I teach them how to pray, to know God, something like that. And the parents were oh so happy about their children, because they practice that. They ask their parents about---they talk about it, what they do in school. So, that's how I got cooperation of the barrio folks.

WN: How was the pay that you were getting as a teacher?



VG: It was too small. Just imagine, 40 pesos in the beginning. Forty pesos. But, things we buy before [in those days], kind of cheap.

WN: Were you living at home at this time? With your parents?

VG: Yes. But if I have to go to the barrio, I have to find a place to live.

WN: What did you do with your income you got from teaching?

VG: We spent it. For my sisters. And because there were two of them in the high school. I invested them on the lands, too. So far, we don't need so much of the money because we get something from the land.

WN: So the money you made from teaching didn't just go to yourself.

VG: No. Of course, for myself, for my family, too.

WN: I see. You got married in 1947.

VG: Yeah.

WN: Did getting married have anything to do with you leaving the teaching profession?

VG: Oh, yes. Nineteen forty-seven, we get married. My husband came back 1947 to Hawaii. Because he feel embarrassed I go to school to earn the bread, and him only a farmer. So, he came back. He promised that he will call me to Hawaii. So, I stayed in the job until December, 1948. Nineteen forty-nine, I came here [to Lanai]. February 2. So I have to quit the teaching job.

WN: Was that the first time your husband went to Hawaii?

VG: No. He came here in 1927. He came to Hawaii in 1927. And he came back March, 1947.

WN: He went back to the Philippines.

VG: Yes. That was the first time he came back.

WN: So he was in Hawaii for 20 years, then. Between 1927 and 1947.

VG: Yes. Uh huh. Yes.

WN: And where was he in Hawaii?

VG: At first he went to Kauai. But he could not get along with the job. He went to Maui because he got his brother-in-law and his brother there. So they live. He worked in the sugar. Hawaiian Sugar. And then in 1939, he moved to Lanai to live. Pineapple. Dole Pineapple.

WN: So, 1939 was the first time he started in pineapple?

VG: Yes. Nineteen thirty-nine, he started in pineapple.

WN: Now, when did you meet him?

VG: When he came home [to the Philippines].

WN: So, when he came home in 1947, that's when you met him?

VG: Yeah. But, we had been pen pals [since] 1941.

WN: Pen pals?

VG: Yes. You know, I wrote articles in the Bannawag. That is the Filipino magazine. I wrote a poem. And then when he read the Bannawag, he saw that. And then he saw that the writer is from Batac. Because he is from Batac, too. He tried to write---contact me. He wrote in Filipino dialect because that is his master, too. Then I answered him. Well, after some exchange of some letters, there were love between the lines. (Laughs) When the war was over, he came back. We meet. And then, we agree to get married. I love him too, eh?

WN: Was that the only reason he came back to the Philippines in 1947? Was that to get you, or did he come back for other reasons?

VG: He come back to stay there permanently. Because his parents were---his mother was still living and the sister.

WN: So, he made enough money in Hawaii to be able to come back to the Philippines?

VG: Not too much. He invested income in the land again. Plus, he fix the house. But, you know, he had been a farmer before. But, when the storm comes, the products are all damaged, so he said, "No more prospect. Better to come back to Hawaii." So, he came back.

WN: So, he went back in 1948 after you got married.

VG: No, 1947. November. Thanksgiving of 1947.

WN: And you followed him in 1949?

VG: Yes. I taught. I kept my job because I had nothing to do. January, I work on my papers. So, February 2, I came here [to Lanai].

WN: Before you came, what were your thoughts about Hawaii?

VG: Oh, I thought that it is heaven. I thought you don't need to work hard. I mean, just the money to come in. But I found out. Oh, he show me his paycheck--deductions, so forth and so forth. (Laughs) Only little bit money left.

WN: This is on Lanai.

VG: Yes.

WN: What were your thoughts when you found that you had to leave teaching and start a new life on a plantation?

VG: Oh. I did not know what to do because I [was] used to going out and teach, go with the pupil. While in there, I am left home when they go to work. Of course, I get neighbors, but they are not of my capacity. But I adjusted. "If people live here, I can live too," I said. So, I was happy. ✓

WN: Besides the money and the fact that you were following your husband, were there other reasons why you came to Hawaii? Or came to Lanai?

VG: No. To have a family. To have a family.

WN: Did you ever expect to return to the Philippines?

VG: I expected, but.... Because when I came, I did not file my resignation yet.

WN: You were teaching.

VG: Yes. I asked for a leave of absence, and they granted it for two years. But after two years, I did not like to go back. I wanted to raise my child here. Plus my husband is still here. I want to stay here, too.

WN: Did you talk about it with your husband? On what you were going to be doing?

VG: You mean, when I will come to Hawaii?

WN: When you thought maybe you might be able to go back [to the Philippines]. Did your husband want to stay here?

VG: No, he wants me to stay here.

WN: But did your husband want to stay?

VG: Yes. He wanted to stay. Until he can work.

WN: Did you ever expect to do any teaching on Lanai?

VG: No. Because I know then that if I have to join the teaching force, I have to go back to school. In University of Hawaii.

WN: In Honolulu?

VG: In Honolulu. And we had to stay in Lanai. That's a far place. And furthermore, the child is more important now, than to go back to school and teach.

WN: Your first son was born in 1950.

VG: Yes. In Lanai.

WN: Were you disappointed that you couldn't do any teaching?

VG: No. No. I have work enough in the teaching. I like to relax my mind already. In the Philippines, you have to write your lesson plan; you have to make your devices. Oh, it's terrible. I'm more relaxed now that I don't do paperworks.

WN: You were about 34 when you got married?

VG: Yes.

WN: Did you feel any pressure that you had to get married?

VG: No. Because by the time, my sisters, they were about through. The only thing that hold me to get married was them. I have to support them with money. So, it's just right. They don't have any complaint because they told us, "You go ahead."

WN: Did you send any of your paychecks home from Lanai? Did you send any of your Lanai paychecks to the Philippines?

VG: Oh, yeah. I mean, I send. He [VG's husband] got an engineer nephew. He was going to school taking engineering. We send him.

WN: Did other women come to Lanai that same time that you did?

VG: No. Because these women were 1946 comers [i.e., when many Filipinos came to Lanai]. I came on a special privilege [in 1949]. My husband was not an American citizen. But there was law. Mark Tydings--Mark Tydings law.

WN: Tydings-McDuffie?

VG: Yes. That is when you were a resident of Hawaii, 1939 to 1941, you can order your wife [from the Philippines]. But then, after that, I don't know how many years, that was off already. That's how I came [since VG's husband was a resident 1927-1947].

WN: Your husband was a resident.

VG: Permanent resident.

WN: Oh, I see. Okay. Would you describe what living conditions were like on Lanai? Can you describe what your house was like, first of all?

- VG: Oh, yeah. My house was a two-bedroom house. There was no toilet. We had the community toilet there in the next block. We don't have any---you know, this bathroom like that? But after one year I arrived there, they put on toilet in the home. And we get running water. But I did not go to take a bath. I did not go bathe in the public place. I make warm water, and then my husband built a small shed there. I carried the hot water there and then take a bath. And wash. I did not use the public (Laughs), public like that.
- WN: How many people used the same bathroom and shower and bath?
- VG: Oh, the whole community. Get big one. But I did not like.
- WN: So you were all living---the whole community was living in the same area?
- VG: Yes. Different houses, though. (The community was divided into blocks, with about 150 people living in each block.)
- WN: How would you compare your house in Lanai as compared to the house you had in the Philippines?
- VG: Oh. Our houses in the Philippines, they are bigger and different types. But not so bad. It's good. It's made of wood.
- WN: The house in the Philippines was made of wood, too?
- VG: Yeah. And galvanized iron.
- WN: Did you have any appliances at all? Any kind of modern appliance [in Lanai]?
- VG: Oh yeah, we get. The icebox. But kerosene stove. (Laughs) Was kerosene...
- WN: Was there electricity? Was there electricity in...
- VG: Yeah, we get electricity also. It was kind of cheap. You know how much we pay for the two-bedroom house? Twenty-two dollars, including light and water.
- WN: Twenty-two dollars a month.
- VG: Yes. A month. But after one year I stay there, they put it up, because they put the toilet, something like that.
- WN: Do you remember how much it was? After they raised it?
- VG: It came to \$27.00---\$27.50. When I came to Wahiawa already, it was already \$27.50.
- WN: So you had an icebox, and you had a kerosene stove. What else did you have?

VG: Oh. Just a bedroom sets. This bureau that---what you call, to put your....the bedroom set, huh? The mirror and something like that, yeah. I get complete. My husband furnished it before I came.

WN: Was your husband living in that house before you came?

VG: Yeah. He was living with a friend. Single man, too. But when we get one child already, the man move out. Because we get only one bedroom and we get a child, we need more space. So, he moved out.

WN: Was the camp separated between the Filipinos and the Japanese?

VG: No. All mixed up. Even Hawaiians. But the haoles, you know the boss, they get their own house. Way in the heights. They get big houses, and they get fireplaces. But us in the camp, we don't have that.

WN: Did you get along with the Japanese and the Hawaiians?

VG: Oh, yeah. We make good friends. Even the owners of the stores. They appreciate us very much because whenever I go to the store, I don't charge.

WN: You pay cash.

VG: I pay cash. Because I don't like that one [charge]. I pay cash.

WN: Of the appliances and the things in your home and things in the camp, was any of that provided by the company? For free?

VG: No. We had to buy by ourselves. They give us only the house. And the light. And the water.

WN: What do you remember about the 1951 strike on Lanai?

VG: It was a long strike.

WN: It was seven months long.

VG: Yes. The Lanai people did not like to go to work unless they give them their demands.

WN: Lanai was the only plantation to strike in 1951.

VG: Yes. When they offered [the workers in Wahiawa] something, they took it. But the Lanai people did not take. They wanted more...

WN: Do you know why they didn't?

VG: I don't know. They just---maybe just for hardhead. Because if the people no work, the pineapples will be rotten. And then, of course, the bosses, the company will have to agree with them.

Because they get no more help. I mean, the workers. No more workers to hire. To help pick the pineapple. So, they just is there just to play hardhead so that they can get more benefits.

WN: Was it the workers who were hardhead, you think? Or you think it was the stewards or the union itself on Lanai?

VG: Oh. All of them. Because the chairman was the head of the union, that was the legislator, [Pedro] Dela Cruz. So, he have to pound them, too. They strike.

WN: So you were aware that Lanai was the only plantation striking? At that time?

VG: Yes. By the time.

WN: Did your husband picket all seven months?

VG: No. He picket, I think around two months only. He came to Honolulu. He asked permission [from the union]. Because he said, "I got a family, I have to---I don't have any income, so I have go to work." But he has to pay certain amount. I think---I'm not sure. Twenty percent, I think. From his pay, he give it to the union. But still, I prefer to let him work than to stay there with the striking workers.

WN: So he picketed for two months, then he went to Honolulu.

VG: Uh huh [yes].

WN: And what did he do there?

VG: Construction job. But I don't know the company he worked for. It's just a small little business. Japanese contractor, he work.

WN: So, how long did he work there?

VG: Maybe around two months. Because the strike then was over. I don't know. Exactly. When the strike is over, they called him--- I called him. So, he came back.

WN: So what were the women doing during the strike?

VG: They played in the union hall grounds. They cook. They serve the food. To the members.

WN: Did you do that?

VG: No, I did not go. I did not like the way they cook.

WN: (Laughs) What do you...

VG: (Laughs) I better cook what I get at home. My husband was still earning something. You get something. So, I cooked my own and my boy one.

WN: Didn't they ask you to come out and help cook?

VG: No. Because I get a small baby. They cannot force me. And I was not working then. I was not working yet.

WN: Did you hold any job at all on Lanai?

VG: No, I did not.

WN: So did you feel that your husband's income was sufficient?

VG: Yes. Because he could get extra money [i.e., he received more wages than field workers]. He was a carpenter. And then he get--- the pay was enough.

WN: Do you remember how much he was getting?

VG: Oh, I don't remember now. But when I came, it's only \$1.33. An hour. Nineteen forty-nine.

WN: But that was still better than [what the field workers were getting]?

VG: Oh yeah. The rest was 87, 90 cents. The workers in the field. Engineering department, they got \$1.33 an hour. We don't spend too much because we raise our vegetable. I raise chicken behind the house. So for food, we get the eggs and the chicken.

WN: Was that primarily your job?

VG: Yeah. Aside from being a housekeeper. Uh huh.

WN: Okay. Your husband was transferred from Lanai to Whitmore in 1952.

VG: Nineteen fifty-two.

WN: Do you remember why he was transferred?

VG: He get low seniority in Lanai. So those who get low seniority and they get surplus workers there, they transfer to Wahiawa. Because they need the men to work. So, my husband, who get a low seniority, we were 80---80 families who were transferred to Whitmore. But they did not like. Some of them quit. Some of them went overseas. So we were only few who came here.

WN: Was the fact that they reduced acreage in Lanai have anything to do with it? [Between 1952 and 1953, Dole reduced its Lanai acreage by 900 acres.]



VG: Yes. They reduced. In fact, they lay off some also before that. They laid off some workers. They sent them to the Philippines free. They paid them free transportation, and then they went back.

WN: But by that time, you didn't want to go back.

VG: They did not offer us to go back. They hold us back. But low seniority. So, we just stayed. (But we didn't want to go back to the Philippines.)

WN: Would you rather have stayed on Lanai?

VG: No. I wanted to come here, too [to Whitmore]. Because I figure out that when I go for vacation to the Philippines, from Whitmore to the airport, I don't need to find another place to stay. While if you stay in Lanai and you go for vacation, you got another house to stay. You cannot go direct to the airport. That was my main....and plus, Lanai is only a small town. I want to come to a bigger place. That's why when they told us to come to Wahiawa, we quickly packed our things.

WN: What were your impressions of Oahu? What were your thoughts of Oahu before you came?

VG: From the Philippines?

WN: No, from Lanai.

VG: It's a bigger place and greater opportunity to find a job. Maybe for me and for the children when they grow up. Because in Lanai, they have to go out of the high school already, and then they don't come back. They come here to find job. In Oahu. So, it was a good....

WN: So, being near your children was another reason why you wanted to come.

VG: Yes, we have to think ahead of the future.

WN: Were there any other reasons for coming? Did the company tell you anything--things that were good about Whitmore and Oahu?

VG: More chance. More job. I don't like my husband to just a pineapple picker. When he was here, he was trained as an operator. After that, he was a truck driver. And then afterwards, he was a job foreman. Luna. I call it luna.

WN: Now, when you came to Whitmore in 1952, did your husband begin working right away?

VG: Yes. He went to report right away. And he work. He came here Saturday, Monday he works already.

- WN: Was it difficult settling in--finding your housing and everything?
- VG: No, because they give us a house. They give us a house. A bigger one. But we pay more--\$31.50. Good one.
- WN: You decided to work in 1956. Pineapple field. Can you tell me why you made that decision?
- VG: My lady friends were all working. And I see that they can buy anything they like. Because the money they earn is for them to spend, too. The money that their husband earns, that is for necessities for the house and everything there. But when the ladies work, I wanted to work, too. To get extra money so I can buy what I like. I can buy what I like with my husband's pay, but I think better if I earn the money I spend. And I have to send money to my parents, too. To the people---those who need the help in the Philippines (my sister and my husband's nephew). If they write, even if they don't ask, if I see that they need the help, I have to send them.
- WN: You said your husband's money was more for necessities. What did you consider necessities?
- VG: To pay the bills, the food we get, to pay for the house, and to save. For the future of the children.
- WN: And you also had another child coming. Another child was born in 1953.
- VG: Nineteen fifty-three. Rolando.
- WN: And you said you wanted to earn money to buy things for yourself. Like...
- VG: Yeah. And for the children. To get more luxuries, eh?
- WN: Like what? What would be a luxury?
- VG: To buy a new TV. To buy a new furniture. To buy a stove, or something like that.
- WN: So these things were bought with the money you earned.
- VG: Not only the money I earned. We combine---I don't separate my earning, we combine. But you know what I mean? I feel better if I---you know, I like to spend. I feel better if I earn a little bit than to ask--just to ask [for] money. Because in the Philippines, I was used to having my own pay. Now I want to go back to work and get my own pay.
- WN: I see. Okay, we'll get into your income later on, okay? Right now, I want to get into the work itself that you did in the fields. When you decided to work, did you have to take any type of test?

VG: No. I just went to apply at the Dole office. In Wahiawa by the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association]. That's the place before. So, the clerk get our names and then, they said they will call us back. When to work. But before that, we had to go to the doctor for physical. The company has to pay for our physical. To see if we are able to work. So, I was hired.

WN: Did they ask you things like, "Were you pregnant?" Something like that?

VG: Oh yes. Yeah. You have to fill up the form, eh? "Are you pregnant?" "You go back to school?" Something like that.

WN: You remember what other questions there were on the application?

VG: "Do you have any history of heart ailment?," "What kind disease you get at present?," "What is your recent operation?" Something like that.

WN: Do you know of any ladies who were pregnant when they filled out their application?

VG: No.

WN: Okay. You were telling me last time that you lied about your education on the application?

VG: Yes. When they asked me what grade, I put only seventh grade.

WN: Can you tell me why you felt you had to do that?

VG: I was ashamed to tell the correct one [level of education]. Because the work I am applying is only farmer job. So they might not take me if I told the truth. To work in the fields. So I just---just a common person.

WN: What made you think that? That they might not take you?

VG: I don't know. I was ashamed. Because I see these people that are having nice kind job [with VG's level of education]. While me, I'm only in the pineapple field. (Laughs)

WN: Were you afraid that maybe other ladies might think differently of you if they found out that you were college educated?

VG: Yes. Uh huh. "How come you college and then you like this kind job." If they say that. Well, I was offered a job in the laundry--Army laundry...

END OF SIDE ONE

## SIDE TWO

WN: Okay. You said you were offered the job at the laundry.

VG: Yes. But it was night shift. I did not like---and I did not like to leave my small boy under the care of somebody. So, I rejected the job. If I pick the pineapple field, I can bring the child to a baby-sitter [early in the morning] and then take him out in the afternoon. In that, I did not like to [work] there [the laundry]. Better for me because if I work in the pineapple field, I can just walk to work and back at home. I don't need any transportation. There was no bus service like this one yet. So, I need somebody to ride with. I did not like another place...

WN: Where was the job in the Army?

VG: Laundry. Laundry--that Navy laundry. You know that big one in...

WN: Pearl Harbor?

VG: In Aiea.

WN: How was the pay different from what you would have gotten in the fields?

VG: Well, it is more. And they said, "You don't come dirty [when you work in the laundry]." But for the benefit of the children, for the advantage of the children, I have to work in the pineapple field. Better than that one. Quartermaster in Aiea--laundry quartermaster....

WN: Okay. When you started working in 1956 in the pineapple field, did you start off as a regular worker?

VG: No. Seasonal only. Seasonal.

WN: Did you ever become regular? At any time?

VG: No. I did not become regular. I became non-regular, only.

WN: Non-regular? Do you remember when that was?

VG: I don't remember. Something around 1964. Non-regular. That is what they call intermittent in the cannery--intermittent worker.

WN: So, non-regular meant that you would work during the busy seasons?

VG: Until the work is---yes.

WN: Yes. So, how did you know when you were supposed to go to work?

VG: They call us. The company called us. And they told us to stay home if we don't have enough things to do. But when we were

non-regular already, if get a slack of job, they have to rotate us. Some work three days--Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. And we have two days off. That's how we continue. Because we have to pay our union dues. And we squawk, too, if they don't--we were not working, and we pay our union dues. I have to talk to them that we need money to pay our union dues, not only them. So, we have to rotate. So, they put it on the table--on the bargaining table--and it was carried out.

WN: Did you get any kind of compensation during the times you weren't working?

VG: Yeah. I get. When I was yet a seasonal worker in 1962, that was the first time we get compensation.

WN: Nineteen sixty-two?

VG: Yeah. Sixty-four dollars---no, \$34 a week. Because they have to go according to how much you make, too. I cannot work everyday before. Because when my children were sick or I get something important to do, I have to stay home. So, my companions had been receiving \$40-something, \$50 while I was receiving \$34. But, I was happy.

WN: What type of jobs did you do out in the fields?

VG: Weeding, picking pineapple, removing of the slips. And then when I was transferred to the Experiment Station, we had to reclassify the pineapple because we had new types. New breed. We have to increase that one. We have to put the medicine. We have to work on the plants. And then we have to deal with this insecticides. And this different kind of chemicals, like fertilizer. To increase. To make it sweet. Something like that. We make sure the amount for them to use when they have to go spray in the plantation. And we have to dig on another kind of experiment. We have to take the soil in a certain place. We have to put it in the oven and see the acidity. How strong the acidity. And then, on that report again, they will base their conclusion, and then they have to find out again what the best fertilizer, or what to do with these places. "That pineapple is not so much. That does not grow good." That's what they do in the experiment.

WN: When did you start working in the Experiment Station?

VG: Nineteen sixty-seven.

WN: So that was after 11 years of working out in the fields?

VG: Yeah. I remember good because my bursitis was operated on 1967, May. That was Mother's Day. So, when I was recuperating from this, I went there. Because no need too much....that's why.

WN: Oh. Is that the main reason how you got that job?

VG: Yes. I was transferred there. And Mr. Tsuji--he died already.

WN: Mr. Tsuji?

VG: [Noboe Tsuji] The luna down there [in the Experiment Station]. He live by the basketball court in Wahiawa. He did not have any complaint. He like to take us because we can read, we can write. He can depend upon us. When he writes. But, when the work slacks again in that Experiment [Station], they close it. We have to go out. I went to the fresh fruit again. That's where I worked. Until I quit when I was...

WN: In 1976?

VG: Yeah.

WN: Could you describe what picking pines was like?

VG: At first it was hard. I did not know how to twist the top. But my friends were good enough to help me and teach me beside my luna, my job foreman. Because the ladies who had been working ahead of me, they know. They are smart. So, I have to stay between them. If I cannot go it fast, one on that side grab, one on this side grab. Sometimes I no more and then I say, "Ho, let me some so that I have some---I can practice," I said. But, they pity me because I was short. The boom was high. So, they are smart already to pick. They pick my pine. But afterwards, I catch up.

We go to contracting [piecework], too. They like me even if I am short. They like me because as we go, I can talk, eh? I asked our luna, "How much is the person getting?"

If he tell me like that, "Oh, the person gets is like this. Why don't we work a little bit harder? Like this, like that."

And then they [the workers] say, "Okay, we go." But I cannot pick my own pine well. But they like to take me.

WN: They liked you because you could figure out the numbers [for piecework].

VG: Yeah. I could figure out, and I could tell them [the pickers]. And so they get more incentive to work. But, if the luna does not tell you how much your percentage like that, (tape garbled) like that. But if I stay there, I could ask. And then if he could tell me, oh, this is our percentage. "How much percentage do you like? You like 150, 130?" [One hundred percent is regular daywork percentage.] If we see that the place is good, we can go more. But if we see that we cannot take much, better rest. Go daywork.

WN: So, do you often tell the luna that you wanted to change to daywork?

VG: No. We like to go. Because the place is good.

WN: If the place is good, then you go contract work?

VG: Yeah. But if not good, we go. But sometimes, 120--the percentage 120, 110 if it is hard. But at least we are not below. We average.

WN: So, you didn't get a minimum pay [if there were enough pines in the fields]. When you had to do contract work and the field was--- there wasn't much pines in the field, how did you get paid?

VG: We were paid by our minimum pay--by hours.

WN: By daywork?

VG: Yes. But if the field does not have too much pine, you have to make the driver go faster. You can run. So that you can cover more acre. And in that way, the acre counts much, too. Not only the density of the pineapple. The acre and the density of the pineapple goes together when you go contract. Even you make only two loads, if you covered 60 acres, something like that, the company still happy. Because we cover much acre.

WN: So in your contract work, you got paid---they counted the acre and they counted the amount of the load?

VG: Yeah, yeah.

WN: And that's how they figured out contract.

VG: Yes. And the quality of the fruit you pick. If it is dirty or bruise, oh, they don't let you go anymore. Because they don't like the pineapple to be bruise. You have to grab the pineapple, clean it---I mean to say, some, they just throw it in the bin with the top [the crown still on the fruit]. And that is a dirty load. They don't like. They have to deduct some percent in there. You cannot get 100 percent if your load is dirty. But if you get cooperation [and] the operator is smart too, there are times when you like to pick all your pineapples because there is one to come and follow you. If you pick all your pines in that field. And certain percent again will be deducted if you get plenty pineapple miss. And if the operator is smart too, he has to help. When the pineapple go up [on the conveyor], he has to cut some, but not all. If there is only one putting [in dirty pines] in the gang, or two, he can catch. But if everybody put in the dirty one with the tops, we cannot make contract. Because your load is dirty.

WN: So the luna tells you that you better...

VG: Have clean job. He has to tell you all the requirements. The load must be clean. Your load must not be bruised. You must have certain acre to cover. And the density of the fruit, too. If the



fruits are big, it is hard to have a contract. But if the pine-apples are small and you get plenty load, there's no better work. Oh, you make money with that.

WN: So, you prefer to pick the second and third crops because the pines were smaller?

VG: Yes. But it is harder to walk, also. But once the pineapple fell, like that, easy. Because you can step on the---you can walk on top of [the leaves].

WN: Oh, once it's been walked once through, the leaves are trampled.

VG: Uh huh. Uh huh. No, I mean the number two field. But number one you cannot do that because [the leaves] all standing up. And you cannot step on the plants because those are mothers that will have the suckers. And they have to bear fruit again for the second crop. So, we cannot. But if you work on the second crop already, you can step any kind there. You can step on the plants. Because they will not let it grow again and have fruits.

WN: They're destroyed. They just destroy it?

VG: Yeah, they will destroy it. You can walk any kind there.

WN: So, they tell you beforehand that, "Oh, this is plant crop so you better be careful when you walk?"

VG: No, we just know. If you work already, you know. Even if second crop already, if it is nice, they want to save it, they tell you. So, we know how to walk.

WN: Did you people complain when they started to speed up the machine?

VG: Yeah. If too much. Because we cannot pick all the pine.

WN: What about when the second and third crops---weren't there a lot of pines underneath? That you had to...

VG: Yes. That's the time you have to dig. You have to dig like that. Because if you take only the ones on top, oh, they can tell. Because even if they don't go inside, you can smell the rotten pineapples. Yeah. You have to dig.

WN: So, as you're moving with the machine, is there someone behind you, checking up on you folks all the time?

VG: No. Once the luna know you, he does not do that. But even if the luna is there, on the road, he can tell if you are picking all your pines. Because there are some lazy guys, they pick only the one on top. But their luna on the road, he can see you digging. But those who do not dig, he will go up to them.



WN: Did you have to pull the slips, too?

VG: Yes. Removing of the slips, too, for plant again.

WN: And how did you like that job?

VG: I like that job. Because I am small. I don't need to bend too much. But those who are big, they hate. Because they get sore back. I mean like these tall people. And then the pineapple is low, they get to bend. But me, I like that. I make money with that. When the company offers that we have to make that one. I was fast in removing.

WN: Did you get contract pay for that?

VG: Oh, yeah.

WN: How did they pay you?

VG: According to how much you make. The counts. And your acre. How fast, how plenty you pick, and how clean. You got to take the right size. If they tell you 10 or 12 ounces, you have to take that. If you take six or seven, they have to throw you away. They don't like you.

WN: What do you mean, they have to be "clean?"

VG: For example, like this one. Get plenty slips. You have to remove all the slips--the right size--in order to have the plant clean. And if it is already--the how many times already, because sometimes you don't go only one time to pick the slips. You have to go there according to the sizes. But when the last time comes for you to go to that field, they let you strip. Take out all of the slips. Because they think that the plants you took already--the slips you removed--is enough for planting. So you have to clean all that plant so that the new suckers will come out to have fruit. If you get those slips left there, the fruit will be small. So, the company did not like.

WN: So you have to clean the plant.

VG: Yeah. You have to clean it. Let a little...

WN: What about the slip itself? Did you have to do anything to the slip?

VG: Put it down. Throw it on the ground [referring to the slips which are not used for planting].

WN: You didn't have to clean it or anything?

VG: No, no, no. You have to just put it down. Behind. Between the lines. And when the next harvest comes, we just step on them. Because they will have to plow the field anyway. And that is a

fertilizer, too. To keep the soil damp.

WN: So how did they keep count on how many slips you picked?

VG: We had a counter, you know? They give us.

WN: Oh, you have a counter?

VG: Oh, yeah. Suppose you have to pick ten slips. Put on the top of the pineapple. Then, if you get ten, you take one click. You click. And then if you---how many thousands you make, that's how. But be careful not to---you have to double check. Because the luna or one from the office, they have to go there and check. Especially if you report too much. If you report too much, and then they find out it is not correct, then they have to deduct you from that. Then they will be watching you every time. I don't like that.

WN: Was that common? People reported too much sometimes?

VG: Some. Some. But when they are caught cheating--because somebody has to go check--they were careful. They reported sometimes 20 or 30 or even 100 less than what they reported [before] that.

WN: What about hoe-hana? Or weeding?

VG: That's easy. They have to check also if you really pick up the weeds. But there are some who just work---they just make the grass fall and the roots would still be there. After that, the next day, they will be sticking out again. You have to clean, too. As soon as you come inside the line. You have to see that even the small one [weeds] you have to pick out. Because it's very expensive to let the people go inside again--another pay, another day without a clean job. That's how we work. Hoe-hana.

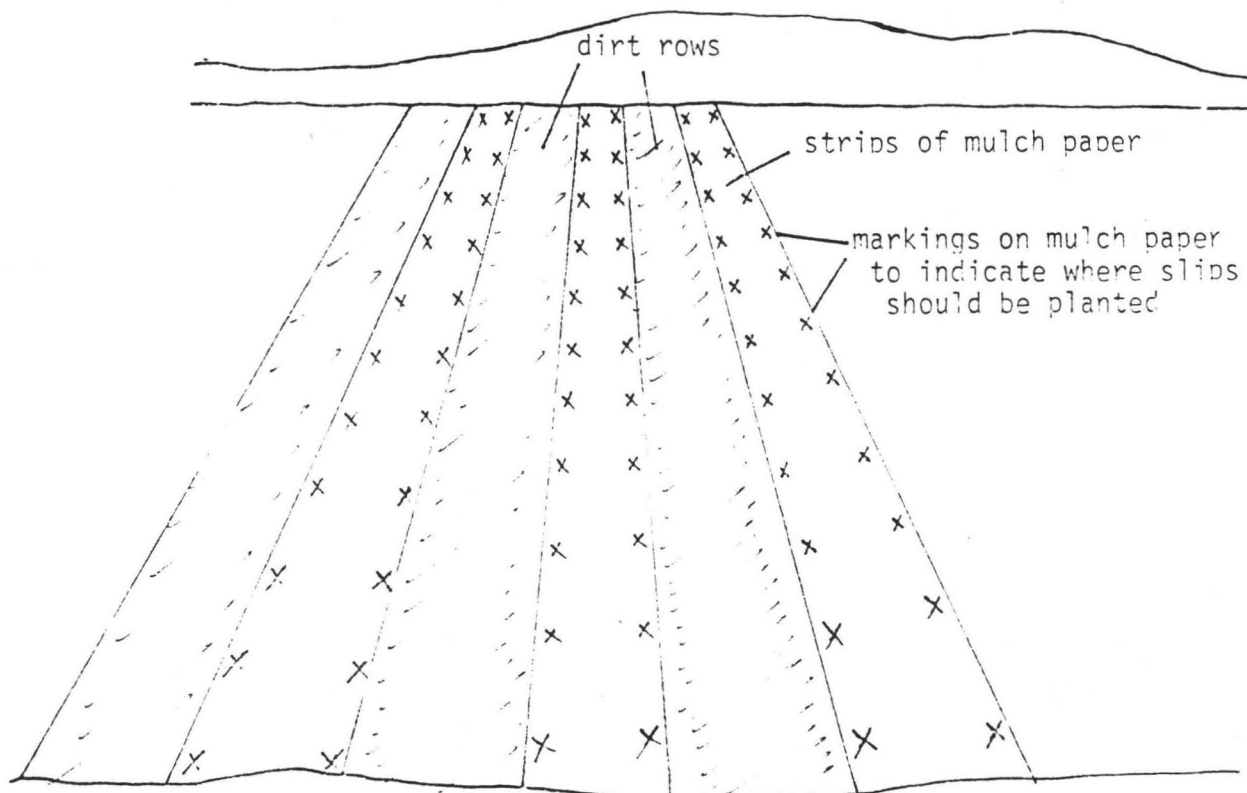
WN: You also said you were a planting checker.

VG: Yes.

WN: Okay. Will you explain that?

VG: Before the men take a cut to plant, you have to go first and count the number of plants in there. Because those planting guys, they have to go on contract, too. You have to tell them how much, that one. So, if you tell them how much, how many thousands in that cut, they can also adjust their time. If they like---if they feel good, they can go faster. That's how they work. Because if they plant more, they have to be paid more. And before, too, if the pau hana is 3 o'clock, the checker has to go and check already. How many the man planted. At least they can calculate how many more rows they can plant. So, you take that, you put that in the record. Then you put also the balance on the paper. So that the next day, you have to know how much they plant again.

Then, when you count, you have to walk on the line. Oh, you have to walk on the line, you have to practice, too. Because if not, you fall. Count by two. One step, you have to---this is the first row, another line. This is the mark [in the mulch paper, indicating where a slip is to be planted]. You go by steps, two like that, so it is easy. Two, four, six.... (The length of each of my steps corresponds to the distance between each mark. So I would walk along the row counting by twos; two marks to each step.)



For example, one row is only 48 steps. Or, sometimes 480, I mean. Four hundred...

WN: Four hundred eighty [steps to a row].

VG: ...yeah. To 490. Some long blocks--especially the corner--they get 500 or 600 [steps]. But, they are not all the same because irregular. You have to go count [each mark in the irregular places]. But, to be sure you count there, but that is so tiresome. You have to adjust to find the average [of a step] again. (The straight, rectangular blocks were the easiest to count, just multiply the number of marks in a row by the number of rows.) [See diagram in introduction.]

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Did you follow the planter? And count each plant?

VG: No, no, no, no. Once you count the cut his is in, you know how much he make. If he can finish that, you know. And then, if he moves

again, you have get another name on another block. And you have to count. Now, you always have to count ahead of them. You must not be the last one to count. And then, when he finish this one [block], you know how much he finish already. You have to record that opposite his name. He goes there, and then, when it is almost 2:30, you go there and you can just tell how much--by the speed he got--you can always tell how much more he can finish. But you ask him how much he plant. And then, you know. Then you will tally that cut. The fastest gang they plant at least 10 or 12 (thousand plants per day). Because they all did for me. As their checker.

WN: You had the fastest gang?

VG: I got the fastest gang. You have to crack your brain. Because how many times the fast men moves? Sometimes, three times. You have to make another paper again for that. And you have to make the balance. And if it is a closing-out field--for example, this is filled. You go to another field tomorrow, you have to finish all of this. Too many paperworks. But the same pay grade two.

WN: Same pay grade as the planter?

VG: No. Same grade two pay. As the one for go pick pine.

WN: Oh, grade two. [Planters receive grade three pay.]

VG: But the only thing is, when I go pick pine and go contract, I rather go checker---no, checker job is hard, too. Because you have to walk, you have to count. Especially, you get 10 or 12. The fastest gang you get. But, for me, better because only the mind is.... I can work with the children, because I got my laundry, too, that time. I still get my laundry that time when I was...

WN: What laundry?

VG: I have to wash for the single men. They pay me \$10 a month.

WN: Ten dollars a month?

VG: Yeah. A month. That is for the telephone and for the water bill.

WN: When did you start working---when did you start doing the laundry for the single Filipinos?

VG: Same thing. Nineteen fifty-six.

WN: Were you doing this all the time you were working in the fields?

VG: Nineteen fifty-six to 1962. Nineteen sixty-two, that was March, I quit the laundry already. I took the Avon Cosmetic. I was a representative lady. Until 1977. Until 1977.

WN: Were there many women doing laundry for the Filipino men?

VG: There were, also. But only few, oh, Filipinos [doing laundry]. There were some---one Portuguese [woman], she took 30, but she did not work in field. But me, I work. I still---I work in the field, I still get six laundry.

WN: You had six different men to do laundry for?

VG: Yeah. Uh huh.

WN: And they were paying you \$10 per month.

VG: Ten dollars a month.

WN: So, you were getting \$60 a month.

VG: Yeah. Extra. But, it was not hard. I was---my children, before, they were trained. They could deliver the clean one, and they go take the dirty ones Friday afternoon. And then, easy. I soak them in the water. After that, I wash. They get their own duties. They clean the house. They put away the garbage. They were good. I train them. If it is time to eat, 5:30, I told them that we eat 5:30 in the afternoon. Even if they go there and play by their friend's house, they ask the time. "Nanay, what time is it?"

They say, "5:30." Even if they are playing, they have to come home. Because we have to---they have to take a bath, and we eat. That's how I train my children.

WN: I want to get into---next time, we can talk about your children, okay? Raising the children. Okay. Did you have any other jobs besides harvesting, stripping, weeding, planting checker, and the Experiment Station?

VG: No more. No more.

WN: Did you work as a planting checker before you worked Experimental Station?

VG: Yes. Planting checker first. And then I went to the Experiment.

WN: Planting checker, you had to use a lot of thinking.

VG: Uh huh [yes].

WN: Did that have anything to do with you getting the job in the Experimental Station?

VG: No, I don't think so. Because in the Experiment, we do any kind job. Not only paperworks.

WN: Do you think any woman could have done the planting checker job and the Experimental Station job?

VG: Oh, yes.

WN: Even without education?

VG: But at least, eh? Mrs. Tsutomi, the Japanese one, they do it in their own way. In Japan, they went to...

WN: Oh, they count with their own ways?

VG: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. They were planting checkers, too. But when we were trained, and the Filipino luna trained us, I went to the Japanese luna too, to check. But since the Filipinos--those contract gang--they ordered me to go checker for them because the older ones, they cannot walk fast already. They cannot go count ahead of them. They were behind. So, they took the fast one. They took us younger ones.

WN: What about when you were out in the field--the rest breaks. Did you get any rest breaks?

VG: No, only when we have our lunch time. But, up to you to make your rest break. You finish your work quick; you count quick; you finish your paper; then, you can have your break. Or, you can go talk with the men. Or, you can go by slow one. You can go help spread for him. That's what I do.

WN: Even when there was contract work, you folks still could take break?

VG: Oh, yeah. We were. You have to eat. If you are hungry. There are some who cannot eat good because they are busy preparing the food for the children to go to the baby-sitter, something like that. So, you have to wrap something, you put it in your pocket, something like that. While you are picking pine, when the truck is changing the load, you can eat right away. You get the...

WN: This is your lunch.

VG: No.

WN: Oh, this is a snack?

VG: Snack. And then, you get another pocket there, you get another pocket there. You can---you know the protection apron? I put pocket there, that's for my sandwich. In my pocket there, that is for my---you know the small cup like that? That Tupperware. The six ounces kind only. You can put water there. And then, when you eat the sandwich in here while the truck is changing, the load is changing...

WN: Your sandwich is in your front pocket?

VG: Yeah, in your front pocket. You eat that, then you drink that. Then, you go again. That's work.

WN: You're not doing this while the machine is going, though?

VG: No, no, no, no. You cannot do that while the machine is going on. Cannot.

WN: What about if someone got hurt out in the fields?

VG: Oh, if it is not so serious, we had the first aid kit from the luna. They are trained. So we have to do even if it is only a cut. But if it is serious one, you have to tell the truck driver. Or, if the boss comes, you have tell him. And the pickup truck and pickup man will come take and bring it to the doctor.

WN: People in your gang--were there men and women?

VG: Yes. Plenty were women. All mix up.

WN: Did you see any all-women gangs?

VG: Yes. Usually the hoe-hana gang. Most of them are here [today, at the Whitmore Community Center]. Senior citizen, now.

WN: Oh, the older ones. Oh, the hoe-hana gang?

VG: Yeah, yeah. Maeda, Aoki, Nakasone--they were my gang before. We all go together. Because they were old hoe-hana gang. And if we don't have too much pineapple, we have to go hoe-hana, too.

WN: I see. They put them all together, then?

VG: Yeah.

WN: Your clothing--can you tell me what you wore out in the fields?

VG: Oh, you had to wear a denim cloth. Thick. First you have your pants. Then you have the cover pants.

WN: You have two pairs of pants?

VG: Yeah. You don't like to be poke. And then, when it rains or even if it does not rain, early in the morning, the pineapple---the leaves are wet. You have to buy the rubber pants. Before we have to order it in Sears. You know this one? Rubber kind for the fireman, something like that? For the workers. But, when get something on the store for sale to cover this outer seat, we bought that one, and we sew it ourselves. And we have to wear our own gloves. Rubber gloves too, plus the vinyl one. Because if it



rains, oh, it's hard to work with the [vinyl glove] when the glove is wet. (I used the rubber glove in the morning when there was dew and the plants were wet. Later in the day, I changed to the vinyl glove because it got too hot with the rubber glove.)

WN: Did you also have a leather glove?

VG: Yeah, the leather glove---I cannot work with the leather glove, too. Because my hands are small. If it does not fit, you cannot work fast. (I only used the leather glove for weeding because it was so thick and bulky.)

WN: And what about on your head?

VG: Oh, you always have your goggles, too; you cannot work without the goggles. You have to cover your hair---your head with the handkerchief this way. And then, another one this way. So that, you know, the hair does not fall.

WN: Okay. So one handkerchief covering your hair...

VG: Yeah. This way.

WN: ...and one handkerchief covering your face.

VG: The head. And then, another one to cover this one [the nose]. I cannot work without that.

WN: You cover your nose, too?

VG: Oh, yeah. Because the dust. You will cough. No good, eh, for the chemicals that they put on the plant. And then, when you get the dust there, you have to smell. That's why when I went to the Philippines, they said they didn't believe I work because I was not black. Because all the one protected here, the handkerchief here...

WN: Over your nose.

VG: ...only the eyes. But when you go to checker, you cannot dress [like] that. Because it's hot in the field. No more plant. Only the lines.

WN: Oh, I see. So, when you're picking, and the plants are taller, then there's more shade and not as hot.

VG: Yeah. But if you go to the planting field, there is no shade at all. Barren. Hot. Looks like you get fever until 2 o'clock in the morning.

WN: So, on your body, what is exposed? Is there any part that's not covered?



VG: Only the eyes.

WN: And you have goggles over your eyes.

VG: Yeah. You have goggles here. You---even here, it's all protected.

WN: From your wrist to your shoulder?

VG: Yeah. But still, you get to sew the old pants, or something like that. You have to put another armband. From here to here.

WN: From the wrist to your shoulder?

VG: Yeah. Because that's the one you need more protection.

WN: Was that all supplied? Or do you have to buy all this?

VG: No, you have to buy all. Plenty more? I got to go.

WN: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 6-30-2-79

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Venicia D. Guiala (VG)

March 23, 1979

Whitmore, Oahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mrs. Venicia Guiala. Today is March 23, 1979. We're at the Whitmore Community Center.

I want to sort of clarify some of the things that you were saying the last time. First, you were talking about working with the field harvester. And do you remember how you removed the crowns, before you put it onto the conveyor belt?

VG: You first pick the pineapple, grab the neck [the area near the crown] of the pineapple, twist the top [crown], and then put it in the conveyer boom. Then it goes up to the truck, and then [into] the picking machine [bin].

WN: When you say "twist off the top," you...

VG: Yes, you have to twist because if you only....that is the easiest way to remove it, twist the top.

WN: Did you notice people doing it in other ways?

VG: If you like to go faster and you are tired of twisting, you have to flip. But you have to know how to flip the pineapple so that it is not being bruised as it goes to the boom conveyer.

WN: How do you flip it?

VG: There is a technique. You grab the [crown] firmly near the neck, and hard, and then flip it.

WN: Is it upwards?

VG: No, forward to the boom.

WN: So you're grabbing it by the crown?

VG: The pineapple crown. Hold it firmly, and then flip it forward to the boom. Then it goes. [The pineapple snaps off the crown and

onto the conveyer. The picker is left holding the crown].

WN: Did they encourage you to do it that way?

VG: They discourage you if they find out that the pineapple is bruised. [When the pineapple drops onto the conveyer.] But if you know how, no more question about that.

WN: So the easiest way would be to [grab the fruit] with two hands and twist [the crown off]?

VG: Yes. But if you get the line up of pineapples on both sides, both lines, and the truck driver is too fast, you cannot do that. The best way is to flip.

WN: So grab one in each hand?

VN: Yeah, grab one in each hand.

WN: And flip it forward onto the conveyer. Now, this is working with cannery pineapple?

VG: Yes.

WN: What about when you're doing it [harvesting] for fresh fruit?

VG: For fresh fruit, you have to hold the pineapple by the neck again, but before you pick the pineapple you have to see the right color and the right size. Because for example, today, you pick the five pounds kind, you cannot pick bigger or smaller than that. And if you pick the color one or color two or three--that means, color one, just a little bit color on the bottom, then little bit more, then color three, little bit more ripe. You have to be very careful of the color and the size of the pineapple. Because they have to tell you what size are you going to pick for that day.

WN: What do you mean by color one and color three?

VG: Color one, shell one, that is just a little bit color.

WN: Little bit yellow?

VG: No more yellow yet, but you can see, eh, the pineapple is almost ripe and mature. Because this color one, they have to send them to the Mainland. Not too ripe because how many days [it takes to ripen]; these are for transport to the Mainland.

WN: And color three would be?

VG: Half ripe.

WN: So in the beginning of the day they would tell you what size [and color] pine to pick?

- VG: Yeah. As soon as you go---before you go to the line, the luna will tell you the size you are going to pick. What color we are going to pick. If you pick the wrong one, wasted eh, because maybe nobody will buy that kind color and that kind size. Because they have to pack it in a certain box. Five for one box, or seven or eight, like that. If they want eight, that's smaller ones. Six is the bigger ones.
- WN: When you were picking for the cannery pine it didn't matter as much?
- VG: Oh, it didn't matter. We just pick. Because that is clean up already. The fresh fruit go first, and then those that they don't like, that has to go the cannery.
- WN: So fresh fruit pine is the first pine to be picked from a plant?
- VG: Yes. Of course, because that is the export.
- WN: And fresh fruit ones, you don't take the crown off?
- VG: No. You have to pull it [the pineapple]. Grab it by the top, put it gently on the boom because if you make like that, bruise [if you drop it onto the boom]. If the pineapple is bruised, it will become black and they cannot sell it. They don't like to buy.
- WN: I heard that because they don't want fresh fruit to get bruised, they don't have contract or piecework?
- VG: Oh, no. You cannot get contract work [when picking fresh pineapple]. But you have to move in such a way that....normally, you have to pick certain amount of load, number of load. But it depends again on if you get the right size. But you have to cover the acre, too. You have to cover the acres. It does not mean that you don't have to pick the pineapple [and] you walk slow. You have to walk fast, too, to cover the acre.
- WN: But it's still daywork?
- VG: Is still daywork. No contract in this fresh fruit.
- WN: Which did you prefer doing, fresh fruit or cannery fruit?
- VG: Fresh fruit. Because in there, you have your time to walk, like that. Furthermore, as we grow older I don't like contract already.
- WN: So cannery pine was still contract work?
- VG: Yes, they did.
- WN: So actually, when you're picking for fresh fruit they're much more particular, then?

VG: Oh, yeah. You got to know how.

WN: I heard now that the fields here on Oahu are primarily fresh fruit fields, and the fields in Lanai now are mostly for the cannery. Is that true?

VG: Yes, because you know why? In the fresh fruit, the pineapple is picked here and shipped directly. That is saving expense. In Lanai, they have to transport it by barge, and it may be bruised. That's one reason.

WN: So for transport purposes easier?

VG: Yeah, easier. And less expense. But if the fresh fruit is not enough in Wahiawa, they have to get Lanai too. They get fresh fruit too, but not as much as in Wahiawa.

WN: Could it also be that maybe they're canning less pine?

VG: I don't think so. But the main reason is that they don't like the pineapple to be bruised.

WN: Last time, we were talking about your clothing. And I didn't ask you about what you wore on your feet.

VG: Boots. And we have to wear the [leather] working shoes, too. But the boots is easier to take off [and] put on.

WN: These are rubber boots?

VG: Yeah, rubber boots. And early in the morning, even if there is no rain, get dew, eh. And as you go inside [the pineapple rows], you come wet, and usually, your shoes will be wet too. I don't like my feet to be wet so I have to use boots. Most of the workers now use boots.

WN: You were just talking about rainy days. You remember how hard it had to be, or hard it had to be raining for you to not work that day?

VG: Before, when no more fresh fruit yet, when not too much rain, you don't work already. But when we get this fresh fruit, we get this caterpillar to pull the truck and they need the order, we have to work. So unless the rain is so strong, we have to work.

WN: Have you ever had to stay home more than one day because of rain?

VG: Yes. When the weather is so bad.

WN: But what if they had an order to fill the next day or something?

VG: The field boss will come around and....or they call you up to go

out. Sometimes only one gang. If get the special order to be filled.

WN: Would that be voluntary?

VG: To go out? No, if they select you, you have to go out.

WN: Were there any difficult parts of the field, or easy parts of the field, to pick pine?

VG: Oh, yes. The difficult part is first round. When you go first round, the first crop and the first time to go inside the line. That's the hardest part.

Another thing is, when the pineapple is number two crop, and the first time to go inside again, that's difficult to walk (because the leaves are already trampled from the first picking). The leaves are all tangled up. And the first crop, too, the leaves not so tangled, but it is close together, and the leaves, they are interwoven. It's hard to walk.

[The first crop harvesting is difficult because the leaves grow into the rows, making it difficult to pass through. The second crop is also difficult because the leaves lie trampled along the ground by the first crop harvest.]

WN: Does the truck slow down because of that?

VG: Yes. We have to yell up to the driver, too, if he is too fast.

WN: How about easier parts?

VG: Oh, when you are cleaning up, you pick up the last fruit [crop] already.

WN: You call that "cleaning up?"

VG: Uh huh [yes]. When you take all the any kind color, any kind size. And that is for the cannery.

WN: Because after that, they're going to just plow it up?

VG: Yeah.

WN: How about the night shift? Did you ever work night shift?

VG: Yes. Well, I work....1973, that's my first time to work on night shift. Because we were in fresh fruit, and they needed some. We could not refuse because it was on rotation. Rotation basis. [During the slack season, non-regulars took turns reporting for work during the week.]

WN: So how was night shift different from working day shift?

VG: If you are not used to, to look at the colors. Especially at twilight. At twilight, looks like the pineapple are all ripe. So you have to grab. But when it is in the bin, oh, terrible. It's not mature. But once you are used to, it's nicer. Because if you have the small children, you can prepare your children to go to school [in the morning] if you are night shift. But I could not sleep. I'm not used to night shift.

WN: When were the hours for night shift?

VG: Four-fifteen [4:15 p.m.] to 1:00 [a.m.]. Four-fifteen we go out, 4:30 we start work. And then, 1:00, we finish work. By the time you come home and take a bath, will be 2:00 already. But the premium, the night premium. You get more from 7 o'clock [p.m.]--I forget already. Beginning 7 o'clock already, you get I don't know how many cents. And past 12 [midnight], higher premium again.

WN: Is this your wages?

VG: Uh huh [yes].

WN: How about piecework; did that go up too, contract?

VG: Oh, no. No more contract in night shift when I work, because that was only fresh fruit.

WN: What about when you people had grievances; who did you usually go to? If there were a, say, speed-up, things you didn't like.

VG: The union.

WN: You go to your steward?

VG: You go to your steward and the steward go to the chairman. And you prepare the grievance. And they have to go see the truck driver or the company. And I have to talk.

WN: Did you realize that until 1972, the women were getting 10 cents less than the men per hour? [According to the new wage schedule, under the 1946 contract, men and women were classified under separate pay scales, with women workers receiving 10 cents less than men workers within each labor grade.]

VG: Nineteen seventy-two? No.

WN: Until 1972.

VG: No, because there was job classification. Grade 1, lower; grade 2, more; grade 3 and up. When I work already, there is the labor grade classification.

WN: But even within the labor grade, a male in grade 2 [e.g., harvesting] would get 10 cents more than a female in grade 2.

- VG: No, we get the same. Unless the men is the regular, and we only non-regular. We have to go on our basis as non-regular. (Regulars and non-regulars received the same hourly wage. Seasonals received less.)
- WN: What about promotions; do you know how people were promoted? On what basis they used to promote someone to luna?
- VG: According to their production. You are a luna and the gang you watch, they produce much, they give you credit.
- WN: They give each worker credit?
- VG: Uh huh.
- WN: So there is like a grading system, then?
- VG: Yes. They have their efficiency record, like in teaching. Once the luna get good performance, his gang good performance all the way, oh, they have to give consideration, too.
- WN: Was this system in effect all the time you were working?
- VG: Yes.
- WN: When you weren't working, in the off season, what did you do in the off season?
- VG: When we were laid off, you mean?
- WN: Uh huh.
- VG: Well, we have to do the job at the house. You patch the clothes again, that you need. Because not every time you going get time. So you get time to fix the clothes, working clothes. And do sometime job, the household job.
- WN: Did you try to look for any paid job?
- VG: We tried, especially when we have the compensation. But nobody hired us because we are field workers. I stated in my application there, but same kind job in the field. There is no field job that they can offer. Maybe is kitchen helper or janitor, like that; they may take us. But I specified in my paper that I like field job, because I'm used to that.
- WN: So there were other jobs that you could have taken if you wanted to?
- VG: I think so.
- WN: You were talking the last time about rotating the non-regulars; Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday.



- VG: Yes, if the work is not enough, we have to rotate. Some stay home and some work. But if the company feels that we get enough job, then they call us all up.
- WN: Did you have any complaints saying that you weren't being called enough, or you were being called too much, or anything like that?
- VG: No, because they are careful, too. We have to go after our luna if he takes any kind. We have to know your seniority, too. If you are more old in the company working, you get more seniority.
- WN: What do you remember about the 1965 one-day strike?
- VG: We did not strike because they settled the contract before the deadline.
- WN: Well, you said that they sat out for one day.
- VG: Walk out. Oh, maybe that was the time when get a problem in the union and the company, and they could not settle the question right away, so they decided to strike one day. Yeah, I remember that.
- WN: Do you remember what the question was?
- VG: I don't remember already. Maybe on the classification of job for a certain employee. Usually, that's the case.
- WN: That's usually the case when there were differences between the union and the....
- VG: Uh huh. They has to stay one day to protest.
- WN: In 1968, the year of the 61-day strike, you helped organized the Dole-Whitmore ILWU [International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union] Women's Auxiliary. Can you tell me something about that?
- VG: The men needed help from the women. So they suggested that the women should have a group also, for the picket line. The chairman of the union wanted us to have a meeting. He called us, he did not tell us what is the purpose of the meeting. He just said, "Everybody go to the club house and we have a meeting." When we went there, he told us the purpose, it was to elect one chairman so that we have this women's group.
- There were candidates. We were there. There were four nominated for president. When my name was nominated, I refused but they said, "You cannot. What is your reason?"
- "I don't know how to drive. I don't know the procedure," I said.
- But they said, "We help you."
- Because there was one elected, but she became sick. She didn't

like to go out, so we elected again. That's when I was elected.

WN: Why do you think they wanted you to be president?

VG: Somebody told the chairman that previously, I was the president of an organization, the Filipino Women's Club. And that was a successful club. If I talk, everybody come out. So they tried. I said I did not know. But they [the chairman] said, "In your meeting, I'll be with you to see the correct procedure." So I accepted the job because there is no other way. I cried, but they said, "No, please." So I agreed.

When we had our first meeting, the man [chairman] came. I presented my agenda and he saw how I conducted the meeting. But he said, "I cannot suggest any better one for you, so you are getting along all right," he said. So we followed. We get along.

WN: What was the actual function of the organization?

VG: We have to picket also. We have to divide the groups into seven groups, because there are seven days in a week. Some works on Monday, and the other group, another kind; up to Sunday. We go to the picket line, we serve juice, we have to go and report to the headquarters to clean the building, and when we get soup kitchen for, I think, one week, we have to go there and peel some potatoes, clean the vegetables that they cook. And those who cannot, they sew the apron of those who work in the kitchen. Like the old ladies, we did not like them to go to work; that's too much for them. But they could sew the apron so they donated them; made of rice bags. That was their share, too.

WN: Who was in this organization? Was it workers and housewives?

VG: Only women workers in the field.

WN: How about wives of male workers who didn't work in the fields?

VG: They didn't come. We did not press them to come and tend the picket. They just stayed home. But when we get the kaukau, the food in the booth, they come. Their family come.

WN: How many women were there in your organization?

VG: Oh, I forget. I don't remember already, but more than hundred.

WN: So what areas were they picketing?

VG: We picket only in Dole, in front of the office, in that entrance there. Three places; the cattle feed, by the entrance next to the cattle feed, and there by [the] Dole office. Three, over there.

WN: So some women went to each station?

VG: Yes. You have to divide them.

WN: So you divided into seven groups, so that means you only went out once a week?

VG: Once a week, but those who are far [who live far from picket areas], they come for duty for once a week. But when we had the meeting, mostly every other day, we call for them so that they know. They are informed of what is being done. So we have the general meeting. Not only the picket line. Sometimes we go out in the afternoon, too. When we are needed.

WN: Did any women [workers] refuse to participate?

VG: Some women are tricky; they said they are sick. But we have to send the sergeant-at-arms to check, because they complain about their gas money to come. But that is the part of the job. "If you get gas money when you come to work, you don't have gas money when we are on strike." So they come.

WN: Did you have to pay any dues?

VG: We didn't pay dues when we were striking. But after the strike, they deducted it from our pay. Because we didn't have any income [during the strike]. But the company and the union, they agreed to work on certain jobs that is so very important. Especially, this cattle feed. And those who worked, they were deducted their union dues and their medical dues. But for us who did not work, we did not.

WN: Did you hear about---I talked to other people who said that they thought that the union for the cannery workers was stronger than the union for the field workers. Would you agree with that?

VG: I agree because they get more benefits than we do.

WN: Do you know why that was?

VG: I don't know.

WN: So what was your overall opinion of the union and what it had done?

VG: Well, it helped the members have a better working condition, better benefits for medical and dental, and on this pension. The pension that they receive when they get out of the company. Like their lump sum, before, they did not have the lump sum.

WN: Oh, so now they get pension in lump sum?

VG: Yes. But it is already out again.

WN: Yours is already out?

VG: My husband took already, his lump sum; 1972.

WN: What about....because of the union, were there any bad things that came about?

VG: Some companies, like the sugar, they are forced to close because they cannot cope with the wages, because the union wants pay increases as we go along. And some companies cannot afford, so some companies are being closed because they cannot, they are going out of business. That's the only thing I know against the effect of the unions.

WN: You feel that the same thing is going to happen to the pineapple industry?

VG: Well, I don't think so because the business is good. So far, the business is good.

WN: In talking to some of the women who worked before the union, before 1946 when the union came in, some of them were disappointed because they eliminated the perquisites that the company used to provide. Like free school bus and kerosene and rent. How do you feel about that?

VG: I think the company is right, because the workers were then demanding higher pay. Before, they give this free everything, they provide the services because the pay was small. But as they go along, the company is spending too much too, for them. So they cut the services. Because they have started their life already. You know when the first workers, they give them free everything, even housing. First time. They give them free kerosene, something like that. But as they go along further, they have to cut the services because the company has too many expenses, too.

WN: When you got home from work, did you talk to your husband about work that day, or what you did?

VG: Sometimes.

WN: What would you talk about?

VG: Oh, we talk about how much we make, how we get along, what job we get that day, whether an easy day or a hard day.

WN: I mean after you worked in the fields and you came home, did you feel that you did something good?

VG: Yes.

WN: Could you describe a typical work day, from the time you got up? For example, to start, what time did you wake up to go to work?

VG: Sometimes I get up at 3:30 [a.m.]. Early in the morning, in order

to prepare the lunch, the children to go to school, to bring them to the babysitter, to feed the pets. Sometimes, I wash the clothes early in the morning, hang them. When the lunch is already put in the lunch can, something like that, we still can do something else.

WN: What time would you leave for work?

VG: Sometimes 45 minutes before the truck departs, or sometimes half an hour. (The truck departed at 6:45 a.m. every day.) Because you have time to put on your clothes, and everything. And if you forget something, you get time to go back. Like for example, you forget your hat or your goggle, you cannot work without the goggle.

WN: So does your working day begin from the time you get onto the truck or by the time you go out to the field?

VG: You get 15 minutes traveling time. For example, you begin at 7 o'clock; you are paid [from] 7 o'clock, but 15 minutes to seven, the truck has to go. But if the place is far for you to go to work, even half-hour, even [if it's] 7:30 when you reach that place, you were timed [from] 7 o'clock. (But at pau hana time, the truck picked us up from the fields at 3 o'clock p.m. We are only paid until 3 o'clock. If we are working at a place near the dispatch, it is not too bad. But when we have to work at a far place, sometimes we get back to the dispatch at 4 o'clock. So we really lose out.)

WN: How important was your income that you got, to be part of the family budget?

VG: Oh, it's important because we had to pay the note of our house and rent. In 1953, they offered to sell the houses we were in, so we put the down payment and we have to pay monthly. Plus the lights and the water, we pay. And my husband only get that much. Maybe we survive with his own pay, but I like to have a little bit saving for the future of the children, too. Because we like them go to school.

WN: How were you notified that your house could be bought?

VG: They sent us a letter. The company send us, that if we like to buy the house we are in now we have to go and report to the office. So when my husband learned that, he went to report that we like to buy.

WN: So what was the difference between the rent you were paying before you bought the house, and the payments you were making on the house?

VG: We paid more. When we were renting from the company, we paid only \$31.75 [per month]. But when we bought the house, we paid \$34.50.

WN: How much was your house?

VG: The original cost was \$4,780. That was 15 cents a square foot.  
(Chuckles)

WN: When you first moved there [to Whitmore], were there rules that the plantation set; certain rules that you had to go by when you live in that plantation home?

VG: Oh, yes. I remember, we get the billy goat from Lanai. Hunters caught that and gave that to us. It was five months old, that billy goat. They said we cannot keep animals around the house. And then, we raise chicken, it has to be 100 yards away from the house. So you know what I did? My boy wanted to play with that goat so much, I had it killed. Because I did not like to violate the rules, eh. It's a residential district. And you know the goat, he make noise, eh, if you cannot sometimes. So....

WN: Were there other rules you can remember?

VG: I don't know. I don't remember.

WN: Who made the important financial decisions in your household?

VG: My husband and me, we always talk about.

WN: This is for every major purchase?

VG: Yes. The house, the appliances, something like that.

WN: So you both handled the money?

VG: Yes. When we have our pay--which is once a month only, before--we go to the bank, cash it, pay our note in the house, leave some for the daily expenses--the expenses you think until you get the next pay--and the rest, we have to put it in the bank.

WN: Did you have any of your children work to contribute?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

VG: When my boy was 15, he was already in the pineapple--cannery fruit. They work day shift, and sometimes night shift. When the school children comes to work, they hired him [as a temporary job foreman]. But when the school children go back to school, he go back to the gang. He work, I think, so many years, maybe seven or eight years. Later on, he became a seasonal job foreman, too. And he was at the University, second year, the third year, too. They hired him as seasonal job foreman. And he handles the boys like him, so they could click together.

WN: Did he turn in any of the money he made to the family?

VG: No. Our style is that when they were young, when they were born already, I get their credit union, their own bank book. And if they get their money, I put in there. They get their own savings. But when we bought the house, we put down payment to the house, I took some [money] from the older one. When we bought another house, [in Whitmore] 1962, I took again from the smaller one, because he get little bit more than the brother get. Because we know there are only two [of them], that will be their own [homes]. So I want to clear out the accounts [payments] before we start another savings.

WN: Do you feel that--as you look back at your work in the pine--did you feel that you had to go to work?

VG: Not so badly. But since I was used to working already, I like to work. Because it has something to do with the financial condition of the family. Plus, the pay was getting more. You can buy some luxuries and still save money. And you can send the children to school. Just imagine, two of them finish University. Oh boy.

WN: Do you feel you could have done that if you hadn't worked?

VG: Maybe. But with hardship. If I would have made loans, maybe I could do that. But we did not make any loan when they went to school. The money they make during summer, they can buy their necessities, too--their books, their tuition. But we gave them, too. Because we encourage them to save their own money.

WN: Would you have preferred to be a housewife?

VG: Now?

WN: No, in the times when you were working in the fields, and as you looked back?

VG: No. Because housewife is very lonesome. I like to be with friends, work for something else, something like that.

WN: If there hadn't been a pine industry, where do you think you would have ended up working?

VG: Oh, I would have ended working in school cafeteria.

WN: This was in the Philippines, or here?

VG: Here.

WN: Why do you say that? Were you offered a job there?

VG: Yes, I was offered in Helemano [School, in Whitmore], but I was then working in the pineapple fields so I prefer.



WN: Preferred the pineapple field?

VG: Yes, because more pay. And more enjoyable if you go with friends. If you work in the school cafeteria, only just to cook.

WN: Whereas, out in the fields....

VG: Yeah, different jobs. You go with different people and you laugh, you exchange stories and like that.

WN: How do you think your work in the pine industry compared to, say, people who worked in the sugar industry? Do you think you had it better or worse?

VG: Oh, I don't know because I have not experience to work in the sugar.

WN: How about in the pine cannery; have you talked to anyone who worked in the cannery?

VG: Yeah, I get some friends before. They said it is nice. The only thing is that there are some who cannot take the smell. And then, they become sick.

WN: So you were happy that you ended up in the fields?

VG: Yes, I was happy. Though it is a hard job, I was happy.

WN: What is your overall opinion of the pineapple industry as an employer?

VG: Well, they are good.

WN: Would you encourage your sons to work there permanently?

VG: To the pineapple, too? No, because they get their own work already. They get their own job now. Before, they were going to school yet, they worked pineapple field, seasonal.

WN: Would you encourage other people to go into field work?

VG: Yes. Especially, those who don't have any job, they come from foreign places, pineapple is the best because they don't screen you too much. So long you know how to pick pine, you understand English, you understand the luna, what he tells you. Because the pay is high now, and the benefit is good.

WN: How about women? Do you encourage women to go in to work in the fields?

VG: Oh, yes. I tell those who just come from the Philippines.

"Oh," they said, "the pineapple work is hard."

"Look at me. I'm small, how come I work so long? It's nice, if you know how." Because they have to look at you, they have to put you in the same gang, category, where you can do the job. That's why the luna is there, the job foreman is there; to look how you work. And then, if you can do the faster job they put you there. But they have to go according to your age and how much you can do. That's nice, they classify you.

WN: So that's the advice you would give to immigrant women coming in to Hawaii?

VG: Yeah.

WN: What about local women who grew up here?

VG: No, I cannot do that because they get different ideas. They get different background. Some local people, they are born easy, eh. Those who are born here, you get easy life, eh. Not like in the Philippines; you have to farm, like that, to get our living.

WN: So are you saying that because of your background you were able to enjoy the pineapple field work more?

VG: Yes.

WN: Besides the money and the friends that you made, what else do you think you gained from working out in the pine fields?

VG: Knowledge of horticulture. When I was in the Experiment [Station]. I know how to apply the different kind of fertilizer to certain plants, and I know how to treat the soil. To deal with insecticides.

WN: What do you think the future of the pineapple industry is? Who do you think will be working pine in the next 20, 30 years?

VG: The immigrants. Because those local people now, they get job. They don't like the dirty job. So the immigrants, especially the Philippines. And more are coming in.

WN: You say, "especially the Filipinos."

VG: Because those who are here now, they are the relatives. And where will they put them to work? Some are working in hotel, some are working in the banks as teller, some are just professional--nurses and doctors, dentists--they are working in some other kind of job. But those who did not have any degree or what, they ended up in the pineapple field.

WN: In 1963, Dole opened a plant in the Philippines, Mindanao. It's called Dolefil. What are your feelings toward that; Dole expanding to other parts of the world?

VG: That is nice, to give them employment and income. But the labor

there is cheap. Ten cents an hour or less than that. Four pesos a day, before. When they opened it, it is only four pesos a day. And the dollar is six times before. But now, 7-1/2 [i.e., one dollar equals 7-1/2 pesos]. When they opened that in the Philippines before, we intended to apply to go there and work. But they [Dole plantation in Hawaii] did not like the workers from Hawaii go to there. Because if they do that, or else no more workers here [i.e., everybody would follow].

WN: But the wages here are the highest.

VG: Yes. In there [Philippines], 10 cents an hour. They work as long as 10 hours, no more overtime.

WN: The wages in Philippines?

VG: Yes. Because they don't have any organized labor union.

WN: What do you think of the women's movement; you know, women's liberation today?

VG: It's moving on.

WN: Are you in favor of what they're doing?

VG: Yeah. That's good, eh. No more discrimination.

WN: If you were to live your life all over again, what parts would you want to repeat? What parts did you like the most, in other words? Would you do what you did all over again?

VG: Oh, I go back to the fields again. It's enjoyable, and the pay is good, the benefit is good, the medical. What else do you like?

WN: Do you have anything more to say?

VG: No more. I think that's all.

END OF INTERVIEW

**WOMEN WORKERS  
in Hawaii's  
Pineapple Industry**

**Volume I**

**ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Ethnic Studies Program  
University of Hawaii, Manoa**

**June 1979**